

Response

A. Introduction

Claims 1, 4-6, and 13-17 were pending in the application prior to entry of the preceding amendments, and *claims 1, 4-6, 13, and 15-17* are pending now.

Claims 1, 4, 6, and 15-17 have been allowed. The Examiner has, however, rejected claims 5 and 13-14 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,276,712 to Welch.

B. The Rejected Claims

Applicants disagree with the Examiner's rejection of claims 5 and 13-14. Nevertheless, to expedite issuance of a patent, Applicants have incorporated features of prior claim 14 into claim 5 (then cancelling claim 14 to avoid redundancy) and added further features clearly distinguishing the device of the Welch patent. Applicants accordingly request that claims 5 and 13 be allowed.

According to the Examiner, main body 3 of the device of the Welch patent includes multiple nodes with uninflated material 14 positioned between them. See Office Action at pp. 2-3. Without conceding the correctness of the Examiner's contention, Applicants note that *elements 14 are tethers connected solely to the main body 3*, providing no territorial protection to any occupant of the vehicle. See Welch, col. 3, ll. 59-61 ("Specifically, the zero length tethers 14 prevent the main portion 3 of the side air bag from forming into a big ball during inflation.") By contrast, the uninflated material of Applicants' invention (*e.g.* uninflated sections 50), which is connected to the vehicle at or adjacent the roof rail, likely provides at least some protection to an occupant contacting that area of inflatable curtain 18. Applicants

accordingly have revised independent claim 5 to refer to this clear distinction between their invention and the device of the Welch patent.

Petition for Extension of Time

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a), Applicants petition the Commissioner for all extensions of time needed to respond to the Office Action.

Fees

Attached is authorization to charge a credit card for \$120.00 for fees related to the Petition for Extension of Time. Applicants believe no other fee presently is due. However, if Applicants' belief is mistaken, the Commissioner is authorized to debit Deposit Account No. 11-0855 for any additional fee due as a consequence of Applicants' submission of this paper.

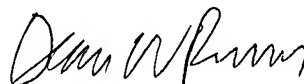
Conclusion

Applicants request that the Examiner allow claims 5 and 13 and that a patent containing these claims and allowed claims 1, 4, 6, and 15-17 issue in due course.

Respectfully submitted,

OF COUNSEL:

Kilpatrick Stockton LLP
1100 Peachtree Street
Suite 2800
Atlanta, Georgia 30309
(404) 815-6528



Dean W. Russell
Reg. No. 33,452
Attorney for the Assignee